

## Unit Reponse

### Academic Programme Review, Department of History

During the fall of 2013 the History Department held four meetings to discuss the report and recommendations arising from our 2012-13 Academic Programme Review. Additionally, both the Undergraduate and Graduate Committees met separately and provided feedback. The undergraduate and graduate representatives on Department Council also solicited opinions from their colleagues and forwarded brief responses. This process took most of the fall of 2013. I apologise for not presenting this report early in winter semester but a series of departmental problems combined with the normal business (including a hiring process) and a large number of snow days delayed the process. On the positive side, I can report that action has been taken on a number of recommendations.

### General responses to the process and the report

Even before the APR, the department had begun a process of curriculum reform based on the changing needs and interests of our students and the high rate of faculty turnover in the past decade. It is interesting to note that more than half the ASMs who participated in the process this time were not part of the department at the time of the last APR in 2002. Consequently, the whole tone of the report is more optimistic; in 2002 the department had undergone a series of losses through retirements, resignations and deaths and was badly in need of faculty renewal. While some renewal clearly took place, the department has seen its faculty complement drop from a high of 28 in the 1980s to 19 in 2002 and to its current number of 16 tenured or tenure-track ASMs. Since the report, one faculty member has retired and two others have resigned. While we are clearly more optimistic than they were a decade ago, we feel it is vital that we at least maintain the 2012-13 complement of 17 in order to maintain our undergraduate programme and continue to expand our graduate numbers. We were gratified that the external review supported our hiring plan for the next four years.

In general, we found the APR process useful, particularly our own self study which was a valuable way to focus our discussions about current strengths, priorities and challenges. It was helpful to receive the input of the external review panel and we appreciate their objective perspective on our achievements and on areas where we need to improve. Many of their suggestions echoed our own conclusions while others sparked discussion and provided some concrete suggestions for reform.

As will be apparent in the action plan template attached, there were a small number of recommendations which were questioned by the department as a whole. We felt that these suggestions may have reflected input by a limited number, or even one, individual. The review committee was on a very tight schedule and that was further limited when the university was closed for a morning due to weather; when we re-opened in the afternoon many people, including a large number of students, did not make it to campus. The account of student opinion,

for example, was based on meeting with three honours students. We feel that our own assessment was based on a broader perspective. As part of our self study we conducted two studies of student opinion: one 'focus group' with the History Society which is dominated by senior majors and honours students and one survey distributed to 18 history classes in February 2013 (339 responses). We feel that this provided us with a good base of student opinion as we respond to the APR recommendations and continue our curriculum reform.

The department also felt that some issues raised reflected a particular circumstance in 2012-13 rather than a long-term characteristic of the department. The external reviewers, for example, noted with concern the dominance of non-tenured faculty on the Undergraduate Studies Committee. There was one full professor on that committee but she was unable to make the meeting with the reviewers due to illness. More recent hires have, nonetheless, been very active on the UGS committee in the past few years and that committee has been busy leading the department through a period of curriculum review and reform. This reflects the high number of new hires over the past decade as well as the fact that these ASMs feel particularly vested in curriculum reform. They have also taken a share of other academic service in the department but we do try to distribute this work equitably. In 2012-13 the department had 12 tenured faculty members and 5 tenure-track faculty members. One tenured faculty member was serving as the Head and another was on sabbatical. This left 10 tenured faculty and 5 untenured to fill all departmental committee. These are the actual numbers of faculty available for both departmental and extra-departmental committees. In 2013-14 there were three untenured and two tenured faculty members on the UGS committee. Overall, in 2013-14 there were 31 positions on departmental committees and as departmental officers (such as department council secretary or library liaison officer); 22 of these positions were filled by tenured and 11 by untenured faculty.

As the action plan template indicates, over the past year, the department has moved on several recommendations made in the APR. Other suggestions will take more thought and will need action over a longer period. As we move forward with reforms we wish to again thank the review committee for its time and input.

Terry Bishop Stirling,

Head, Department of History

16 May, 2014